

The River Current

Winter 2003



Our Mission:
Promoting watershed
sustainability through awareness,
linkages and stewardship.

Saskatchewan Network of Watershed
Stewards
in partnership with the
Canadian Water Resources Association
presents:

**"Beneficial Management Practices
for Healthy Watersheds"**

June 3 & 4, 2003
Saskatoon Inn
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



Watch for more details in our next
newsletter.



If you would prefer to receive "The
River Current" newsletter electroni-
cally, please send your email address
to: partners@saskriverbasin.ca

Summit Will Address Mountain Water Issues

Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin is pleased to announce that its 2003 Annual General Meeting and conference will coincide with the Banff Mountain Summit 2003: Mountains as Water Towers international conference.

The Banff Centre will turn a spotlight on the worldwide importance of mountain watersheds at a conference to be held this fall. Banff Mountain Summit 2003: Mountains as Water Towers is expected to draw scientists, researchers, writers, government officials and environmental

agency representatives from across North America and around the world to The Banff Centre from November 23–26, 2003.



Photo: Banff Centre by Donald Lee

One-half of the world's people drink water that originates in mountain areas. As downstream demand increases, the potential for conflict over the ownership and use of that water increases. As global climate changes and airborne pollution increases, the quantity and quality of water available downstream becomes compromised. Scientists such as Dr. David Schindler of the University of Alberta predict that the prairies could face serious water shortages as Rocky Mountain glaciers — which feed the headwaters of Western Canadian rivers — melt over the next half century.

Banff Mountain Summit 2003: Mountains as Water Towers will focus on topics such as mountain water ecosystems, water ownership, effects of climate change, and mountain watershed management. Speakers will include Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians and passionate defender of water rights; Margaret Catley-Carlson, chair of the Global Water Partnership; Marq de Villiers, whose book *Water* won the Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction in 1999; and Dr. David Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology at the University of Alberta. The event will include daytime conference sessions and evening events aimed at the general public.

Banff Mountain Summit 2003: Mountains as Water Towers is part of the United Nations International Year of Fresh Water and Canada's Wonder of Water celebrations. The Summit is sponsored by Parks Canada, National Geographic, the International Research Development Centre, and the Government of Canada and is offered in cooperation with Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin.

For more information or to register on-line, please visit: www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture

A Perspective on Intensive Livestock Operations

The following article provides an overview of material presented at a conference and does not represent an official position of Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin.

A number of familiar faces gather in the hallway next to the lecture theater to register for "Beyond Factory Farming," the 2nd Annual National Conference on Intensive Livestock Operations (ILOs). Representatives from environmental groups, landowners and interested individuals have gathered early on this Saturday morning to hear a number of speakers from Canada and the United States provide insight into the impacts of intensive livestock operations. The lecture theater at the University of Saskatchewan is full and the crowd eagerly waits to learn more about this contentious issue.

Larry Hubich, President of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, offers us a glimpse into the health concerns of an intensive livestock worker. Health problems for these workers can range from eye, nose and throat irritations to more serious intestinal infections, and upper and lower respiratory diseases. In extreme cases, there is also the possibility of hydrogen sulfide poisoning that can result in death. Hubich's presentation highlights the need for rigorous industrialized standards for intensive livestock operations (ILOs) and legislation for their workers.

According to Kendall Thu, an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Northern Illinois University, the methods for food production and distribution continue to become concentrated in the hands of a few "global food powerhouses." Thu notes that the number of U.S. farms has decreased from 6.5 million in 1935 to 1.9 million in 1999. Statistics Canada reports a decrease in the number of Canadian farms from 733,000 in 1941 to 276,548 in 1996. The 2001 agricultural census indicates another 10.7% drop to 246,923 Canadian farms. His view that "as the food system goes, so goes the rest of society" is already becoming a well-known reality as he points out that ILOs have been linked to antibiotic resistance and quality of life issues.

Why then do the number of intensive livestock operations continue to rise? Many communities see ILOs as providing economic development. However, Bill Weida, an Economist at the Colorado College, takes the position that ILOs actually inhibit economic development and cause depopulation. Many individual farmers sell their land due to problems with odour or economic losses. ILOs can also prevent future economic development that could save the region.

What about consumers of ILO products? Melva Okun, Coordinator of the Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign in North Carolina, tells us that current estimates indicate that agriculture accounts for more than 80 percent of antibiotic use in the U.S. Most often, the antibiotics are used for growth rather than illness. For consumers ingesting these products, the result is an increase in untreatable disease and mortality.

When it comes to animal welfare and intensive livestock operations, the images that come to mind, and in some cases reality, are those of unsanitary conditions and cruelty to animals. However, on this day Doug and Bonita Sauder, hog producers from Waldeck, Saskatchewan, have come to provide what they feel is a better picture. Farmers for the past 20 years, the Sauders feel their operation respects the environment and the animals they care for. Their facility consists of eight barns with concrete floors covered in straw. Curtains on the barns provide for natural ventilation and sunlight. The facility is computer-monitored; meaning the curtains will open or close according to temperature. Both the natural ventilation and straw minimize odour from the barns. Each barn contains a grain ring for feeding and each of its two pens has its own ration. The barns can house approximately 8,000 pigs at a time, making this a "one-of-a-kind" facility in North America.

Participatory workshops in the afternoon provided an opportunity for an in-depth group discussion of the morning's topics. It quickly became apparent to members of the group that there is a need for more awareness and education about the issues concerning ILOs and opportunities for informative public discussion about these issues.

-Continued on next page-



Are there Water Watchdogs in your community?

We are currently seeking assistance in making Water Watchdog kits available in your community. Please indicate if your organization would like to help in one of the following ways:

- ◆ Provide a location where kits could be picked up by participating groups.
- ◆ Incorporate the use of these kits in your organization's programming; we realize that many organizations might be able to use more than the 5 kit limit we have set for individual applicants. Please advise us how you would incorporate Water Watchdog within your programming, and how many children you expect to be involved.
- ◆ Advise your network of contacts about the availability of this kit or provide a link to our web site. Please let us know if you would like additional information brochures.

For more information on Water Watchdog please visit our web site at: www.saskriverbasin.ca
An on-line sign up sheet can be found at: www.saskriverbasin.ca/waterwatchdog/signup/index2.htm

A Fond Farewell



Photo: Jo-Anne Richter, Project Manager

It is with mixed emotion that we announce that our Project Manager Jo-Anne Richter is leaving Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin to embark on a new journey. Jo-Anne will apply her many skills and talents in her new position as a planner for a rural municipality near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Jo-Anne has been with PFSRB since its inception in 1993. Her skills, dedication and passion are incorporated in every facet of the organization and have brought it to the forefront as a leading environmental organization promoting watershed sustainability across the Prairie Provinces. The few words on this page could not begin to adequately describe the far-reaching impacts of the many projects she has been involved with. However, perhaps the greatest testament to her creative genius is the popularity of our new Water Watchdog project, whose concept Jo-Anne developed.

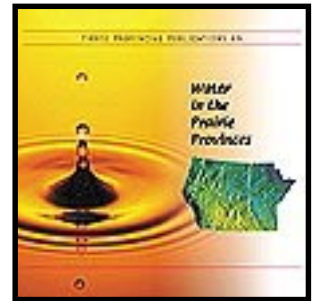
On behalf of our Managing Partner, the Board of Directors and the staff of Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin, thank you for 10 years of dedicated service. We say farewell and wish you every success on your new journey.

Water in the Prairie Provinces

Water in the Prairie Provinces is a three-part publication on water issues on the Prairies. The Manitoba Edition is now printed and being distributed by Regina-based Keewatin Publications. A Saskatchewan edition is planned for mid-March and an Alberta edition will follow a few weeks later. These 32 page, full-color beautifully illustrated booklets are available without charge for public distribution. The cost of the publications has been borne by a number of government, corporate and NGO sponsors, including Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin.

Each edition begins with a common 12-page overview of water issues and water circumstances on the Prairies. The material covers a wide range of interesting topics, including summaries of provincial water circumstances, identification of water users, jurisdictional issues, and several very good illustrations of the quantity and quality of the water resources. The balance of the material in each edition addresses specific water articles particular to that province. The Manitoba edition contains an excellent summary of that province's new Water Strategy. It also contains a fascinating story called Tampering with Nature, an account of human activities and

their impacts, in this case the channelization of creeks and streams around Lake Dauphin. Originally intended to prevent flooding of farmland and facilities, the channels have had several unintended consequences on the ecology of the watershed.



Keewatin Publications is a specialty publisher that has been producing materials in the resources, health, energy, mining, forestry and northern issues for many years. In early 2002, Keewatin published Climate Change, Saskatchewan Edition, a primer on how Saskatchewan may be impacted by climate change and some of the things people are doing to address this issue.

Copies of Water in the Prairie Provinces will be available from Keewatin@sk.sympatico.ca or directly from Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin.

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For citizens concerned about intensive livestock operations, Simon Neufeld, a Researcher at Environmental Defence Canada, suggests asking government to put a moratorium on ILOs until the environmental and human risks can be assessed and public, transparent decision making restored to the community. He notes two examples of legal action and concludes that it is both time-consuming and costly and can cause divisiveness in the community. However, sometimes it is the only action left after public discussion and political appeal has failed.

Perhaps the most persuasive case for the damaging effects of ILOs on the environment, human health and animal health was

made by keynote speaker Rick Dove, Southeastern Representative for the Waterkeeper Alliance in North Carolina. Dove's presentation and graphic video showing the negative impacts of ILOs in North Carolina made his message very clear, "Don't let Canada make the same mistakes made in the United States. As consumers we have choices. We can choose to be informed consumers and we can refuse to buy the products of ILOs." His is a message about lessons learned the hard way. The "Beyond Factory Farming" conference provided an opportunity to learn these lessons the easy way.

"Beyond Factory Farming" the 2nd Annual National Conference on Intensive Livestock Operations was held on November 8 & 9, 2002 at the University of Saskatchewan.

River Ripples

Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative 6th Annual Water Quality Workshop, March 4, 2002, Lethbridge Lodge Hotel, Lethbridge, Alberta

Water quality workshop topics include:

Looking To The Future - The Next Five Years
Water - Thinking Globally, Acting Locally
Current Activities and Research on Water Quality and Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)

Registration fee: \$30.00

For more information call 403-382-4239 or visit their web site at: www.oldmanriverbasin.org

Request for Proposals from Climate Change Action Fund

The Community Stream of the Climate Change Action Fund - Public Education and Outreach (CCAF-PEO) has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Community-based projects for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing awareness of climate change at the household level.

Please note the closing date of March 21, 2003. The new information can be accessed by visiting the Web page: http://climatechange.gc.ca/english/actions/action_fund/public.shtml or by contacting the CCAF-PEO office at (819) 997-2609.

CUexpo - Community-University Research: Partnerships, Policy & Progress, May 8-10, 2003, Delta Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Partnerships among universities, community organizations, governments, and the private sector are growing and are capable of spurring the development of new knowledge and capabilities in key areas, sharpening research priorities, providing new training opportunities, and reinforcing the capacity for development of Canadian communities in the midst of change.

The conference will include skills-building workshops, poster, panel, paper and plenary sessions, story sessions, partnership bloopers, visits within the local community, and opportunities for informal networking. For updates on this conference, visit: www.usask.ca/cuistr/cuexpo



“On The Living Edge, Your Handbook for Waterfront Living” – A New Resource for Cottagers Focusing on Environment-Friendly Living.

Do you live on property bordering a lake, river or stream in Manitoba or Saskatchewan? If so, this book is for you! Co-authors and co-founders of *The Living by Water Project*, Clive Callaway and Sarah Kipp, provide valuable tips, advice and stories to assist you with the unique challenges of waterfront living. Adapted from the original BC version (and being adapted across the country), the SK/MB edition provides information that is Manitoba and Saskatchewan – specific, including resources and contacts for everything you may require – from who to call if you want to plant native trees and shrubs to where to go for dock permits. To pre-order your copy (publication will be May 1) or for more details, please contact Kim at shorelines@naturesask.com or (306) 780-9834. Orders placed before July 1, 2003 will receive the special offer of \$14.95. After July 1, copies will be selling for \$19.95.

If your cottage is in the Lake of the Woods area, you may be interested in purchasing the Ontario edition, which will be available in March. To pre-order your copy, or for more information, please contact Rebecca at shorelines@lrconline.com, 613-692-3571 ext.122

JOB OPPORTUNITY with Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin We are currently taking applications for the position of a full or part-time Manager. Deadline for applications is February 28, 2003. Please visit our web site at www.saskriverbasin.ca for more information.

“Water: The Economic Driver of the Future”, Travelodge Hotel, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Thursday, March 20 2003 - 8:30 am to 5:00 pm For more information or to register, please visit the Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation Inc. website at www.agrivision.sk.ca or call 1-306-384-4491.

The River Current is published quarterly by Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin. Articles and news items will be considered for publication. For further information about Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin Project, or to submit items, please contact:

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